DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY E Schmelzer DATE 7/2/85

R & F

(14)

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Q. Is it true that the Administration is now looking at the F-16 as the possible substitute for the F-15 aircraft requested by Saudi Arabia?

A. --As we have said before the U.S. commitment to help Saudi Arabia in its legitimate defense needs is long-standing.

--The Ford Administration agreed to sell the Saudis an advanced fighter to replace the current inventory of British Lightnings; the Saudis, after a thorough study of the various alternatives, chose the F-15.

--After careful review of this question, this Administration agrees with the judgment that it is a legitimate Saudi need. We will proceed in this matter at the appropriate time in close consultation with the Congress.

--Naturally, when those consultations take place we will be prepared to answer questions about the particular aircraft and the entire range of Saudi Arabia's air defense requirements.

Clearance: NEA - Mr. Atherton
NEA - Mr. Sober
NEA/P - Mr. Sherman

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